

# Notes for the Ekklēsia Meeting

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## The Gospel, Front to Back

by Dan Trygg

“Now I make known to you, brethren, the Gospel which I preached to you, which also you received, in which also you stand, <sup>2</sup> by which also you are saved, if you hold fast the word which I preached to you, unless you believed in vain. <sup>3</sup> For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, <sup>4</sup> and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures...”  
1 Corinthians 15:1-4

“For this reason I too, having heard of the faith in the Lord Jesus which exists among you, and your love for all the saints, <sup>16</sup> do not cease giving thanks for you, while making mention of you in my prayers; <sup>17</sup> that ...the Father of glory, may give to you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of Him. <sup>18</sup> I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, <sup>19</sup> and what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe.”  
Ephesians 1:15-19

**What is the Good News?** What is the Gospel Jesus taught, and what was proclaimed in the early church? **It was not a shallow, one-proposition thing. It was the opportunity for freedom from bondage to sin, the start of a new relationship with God, and the calling to a new destiny.** The introduction to it is as simple as we read above, “Christ died for our sins”. Those verses give an *incomplete* picture of what it meant to honestly and genuinely trust in Jesus, however. Even later in the same chapter, Paul talks about how those who have borne the image of the earthly (sinful, fallen Adam-nature), will also bear the image of the heavenly (Christ-nature) (I Cor. 15:45-48). ***We will be like Him!*** **There is an expectation that we invest in our spiritual lives to bring that possibility about in our experience.** Jesus said that those who continue in His word are His genuine disciples, and *they* will come to experientially-know the truth, and that truth would liberate them (Jn. 8:31,32). Or, again from I Corinthians 15, “Come to be *sober-minded*, as is right, and *stop sinning...*” (vs. 34). In other words, **the message of the Gospel led those who responded to an entire life-change.** The simple message of “God so loved the world that He gave His only Son so that whoever might believe would not perish, but might have life of the age-to-come” (Jn. 3:16) was not a *destination*, but the *start of a journey*. Later, in the same book, Jesus declared that eternal life is given in order that we might experientially-know God (17:3). Again, **eternal life is not a destination. It provides an opportunity to develop a relationship with God.**

The apostle Paul told the Ephesians that, **from the time he heard they had come to faith, he was praying for them, so that they might come to understand what God was making available to them.** He delineates three areas to ponder and explore: (1.) The hope of their calling, i.e., the possibilities and prospects that come with new life in Christ, as well as God’s specific plans for their lives. (2.) The riches of the glory of His inheritance, i.e., what He has made available to us as His beloved children, and especially to fulfill that calling. (3.) The nearly limitless power that is available to those who trust in His inworking might. **It is important to see that this is also the Good News!**

***How is this to manifest in our experience?*** We are to grow to a clear understanding of our faith, an experiential-knowledge of Christ, and to a mature, Christ-like manner of living (4:13). **It comes through recognizing and accepting the truth, and choosing to make the changes necessary to embrace it.** It can come through many ways, through study, conversation, teachings, etc., but in Ephesians Paul emphasized the power of people in Christ who *know* us, or who *receive revelation* from the Spirit, *speaking truth into our lives*. That is uncomfortable in our society, but that is what people who are really serious about growth and change do. They help one another see those areas that need to change, and they share practical insights from their own lives to help people grow and make those changes. **Paul talked about coming to a spiritual maturity. This is defined in terms of becoming like Jesus in our actions and attitudes.** It is important to understand that ***the fruit of the Spirit is not to be a distant, unattainable goal. It is the expected, predictable outworking of the Spirit’s life in and through us.*** He makes the things of Jesus real *to* us, and expresses Him *through* us (Jn.16:14). **The Good News is that we don’t produce these things from our own self-discipline or good works. The Holy Spirit enables us to make change, and teaches us to live life differently.** We learn to recognize the Spirit’s leadings, and we walk those out *in* and *with* His strength. **As we walk with Him, He will work through us.**

**In the letter to Titus, Paul declared that it was the grace of God that instructs us to deny irreverence and worldly desires.** It teaches us to live with sound minds, righteousness behavior and healthy devotion toward God (Tit. 2:11,12). It will also inspire us to practical acts of service and love (vs. 14; cf. I Jn. 3:16,17). **This is the outworking of the Good Message to those who believe, hold it fast, and walk it out.** Notice that grace will teach us to *deny* worldly desires. **There are choices we have to make to turn away from our old ways and lusts.** Romans 8:13 tells us that, by the Spirit, we are to *put to death* the deeds of the body. Jesus said that, in order to come after Him, we must be willing to *deny* ourselves, take up the cross, and follow Him (Lk. 9:23). **You cannot grow in your walk with**

**Jesus, if you are not willing to change, and *stop* doing some of what you have been doing.** Not only is there *no room* for new growth, but your persistence in sin can *grieve the Spirit*. **When you truly grasp the promise and potential of what can be yours in Christ, you will be eager to put aside anything that stands in the way.**

**Again, this is part of Gospel preaching.** In Acts 13:38,39, Paul taught that through Jesus not only was forgiveness of sins made available, but also a freedom from everything which the Law of Moses was unable to liberate them from. From Romans 7, we understand that the Law was unable to free us from sin, because the power of sin would actually use God's commandment to motivate rebellion. Now, **through Jesus there is a whole new life and power available to us to give us *freedom from sin*: The birth of a whole new person inside of us, and the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit.** The NT teaches that we must be born from above, new creations in Christ (Jn. 3:3-6; II Cor. 5:17). **You are *not* who you were before. You are a new person, which is created in holiness and righteousness.** It has *not* been part of your sinful behaviors of the past, or even now. It has been born of God's very nature in a unique way, so that it naturally will bear good fruit (Matt. 12:33; I Pet. 1:23; I Jn. 3:9). In addition, **this new person is made to be energized and empowered by the Holy Spirit to do just that, to express the inworking of the Spirit outwardly in your life.** Let me say it again, *the fruit of the Spirit is not to be a distant, unattainable goal. It is the expected, predictable outworking of the Spirit's life in and through us.* **We should be putting aside the "works of the flesh",** listed in Galatians 5:19-21, "sexual-immorality, moral corruption, doing what feels good, idolatry, drug use and casting spells, hate, fighting and arguing, jealous-obsession, losing your temper, competitive opposition, conflict, group rivalry, envying, drunkenness, wild partying". **These are selfish, sensual behaviors of the old sinful nature and mindset. They are emotional in orientation or expression, and are self-centered, not Spirit-centered.** On the other hand, **if we will put these *aside*, we can learn to walk with the Spirit.** He will make us to become people who experience and express "love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control" (5:22,23). **This is your heritage! This is your birthright! This is your calling!** There is absolutely no reason to continue in angry outbursts or argumentative competition. These are of the flesh, not the Spirit! There is absolutely no reason to live in sexual immorality or living for "what feels good". These are sensual behaviors that are degrading to us, dishonoring to God, and diminish the Spirit's influence in our lives. **If you have these negative behaviors in your life, acknowledge your spiritual condition.** Be honest. "Yes, I still am living by the flesh when I do \_\_\_\_\_." Confess this soul-struggle to God, and ask for Him to lead you to freedom. **Then, draw near to God. Learn to be quieted within, to rest in His presence, and be filled with His love.** It goes so against "soul-agitation", but it is the answer to our issues. Look at the list of fleshly behaviors. See how most of them are about sensual and emotional stimulation and agitation? Now look at the list of the Spirit's outworking in our lives. See how quiet, peaceful and steady these behaviors are? **Those who learn to walk with the Spirit develop a peace and joy in their lives that satisfies their souls and steadies their emotions.** The Good News is that Jesus *can* change your inner life, and *that* will change your outer life. Christlikeness is a real, attainable option for you.

**A key aspect of Gospel preaching is that God wants to be personal and intimate with you.** He wants you to be *more than* a follower. He wants you to be a *friend* (Jn. 15:13-15), ...no, even a *close family member* (Rom. 8:15-17; Eph. 2:19). This is amazing, but this is the message taught by Jesus and His apostles. **Jesus sent the Holy Spirit to live within us to communicate to us, to show us the things God has given to us, to teach us, and to direct us into God's will** (I Cor. 2:12; Jn. 14:26; Rom. 8:14).

**We are also called to join God's Kingdom, as active participants. Gospel preaching was not just focused on the individual; it was focused on the Kingdom of God.** As subjects and servants of God, **we have places of service and duty assignments.** God is the one who determines what they are, but He will not ask us to do what we are not able to do, with His empowerment. **He gives us spiritual gifts for serving one another in the Body of Christ, and for expanding His Kingdom. He also gives us spiritual authority over the powers of Satan, the enemy, so that we can cast out demons and tear down strongholds in people's lives.** Jesus said that the one believing in Him would be able to do the works He did, and even greater works (Jn. 14:12). The "works" Jesus did, in the book of John, were miraculous signs and wonders. So, **God even empowers us to do miracles, signs and wonders, by the leading and empowerment of the Spirit.** This was part of the message of Jesus, and was lived out in the early church. **We ought to be experiencing these same things today. We ought to have lives that reveal the power of God, in some way.** Paul said that he prayed we might come to know the surpassing greatness of the power that is available to us. I believe this is part of what he was talking about. **Are you experiencing them? Are you willing to be used by God in these ways? Then you need to start asking Him about this.** A key principle of spiritual advancement is good stewardship of what we have (Lk. 16:10-12). We show God we are trustworthy by how seriously we study, pray, seek Him, serve Him and obey Him. **The Good News is that God wants to give us the Kingdom** (Lk. 12:32). **Don't miss out on anything He has for you!**